

ENGLISH AND JAPANESE IN CONTRAST. Edited by Harvey M. Taylor. Tokyo: Regents Publishing Co., 1979. 205 pp.

On a dark day in 1974, Harvey M. Taylor, then of the University of Hawaii, told the students of his class in the "Contrastive Study of Japanese and English" to write "term papers of publishable quality" (p. v.). "To varying degrees these students struggled with their assignment" (p. v); unfortunately, the assignment won. In one sense, of course, these papers met Taylor's criterion: they were published, and hence publishable. But if by "publishable" we mean *worthy* of being published, then it is hard to see how the term can be applied to this book. From cover to cover it is badly written, badly edited, by turns uninformative, trivial, error-ridden, and incompetent, and generally useless to its intended audience of EFL and JFL teachers.

The book is divided into four parts: an incoherent introduction by Taylor, purporting to give the "Theoretical and Methodological Backgrounds" to the subject of contrastive linguistic studies; a section on "Syntax in Contrast," consisting of eight student papers; and two previously published articles, one on "Semantics in Contrast" and one on "Culture in Contrast," thrown in as a makeweight. The semantics article (Seiichi Makino, "Contrastive Semantic Analysis and Teaching Japanese") is actually about the different meanings of *naru*, "become." There is some useful information here, but hardly enough to constitute a separate chapter on "Semantics in Contrast."

The culture chapter consists of one article by Toneko Kimura, about--well, about this and that,

and nothing in particular. In the middle of her article, for instance, for no apparent reason, she gives us 25 English sentences written by Japanese students (e.g., "My house is narrow"), and points out the error in each. Makino did much the same thing with Japanese sentences (e.g., *geemu o asobimashita*). It is not clear why, if Makino's examples are of semantically based errors, Kimura's should be considered to be culture-based.

The bulk of the book is the "Syntax in Contrast" section. (There is no "Phonology in Contrast" section, oddly enough.) James Kayoda ("Japanese *rashii* Compared with English '-ly/like' and 'seems'") argues that there are two, syntactically distinct, forms of *rashii*--a dubious thesis, and one that becomes all the less convincing when one notices that Kayoda does not seem to understand such basic grammatical terms as "dominate" (p. 60) and "relative clause" (p. 68), and that his English tree diagrams include a node for postpositional phrases! But even granting his thesis, what follows? Of what value is it to point out that *-ly* and *-like* are not marked for tense, while *rashii* is? Has any Japanese student *ever* said, e.g. "He manlied even as a boy"?

Taeko Izaki Wellington ("Varied English Equivalents of Japanese Intransitive-*suru* Verbs") deals with a more important subject: the problem of intransitive *suru* verbs ("ITVJs"--e.g., *zenmetsu suru*, "to be annihilated") and their various equivalents in English. She offers a five-way classification of ITVJs based on their English equivalents (basically, whether these are transitive, intransitive, or passive); but since her sample includes only 20 words, it is hard to assess the relative importance of each class. Moreover, she makes no attempt to discover if

there is any way to predict the class membership of a given ITVJ, or for that matter to predict its intransitivity in the first place. If there isn't, then the categories are not very useful pedagogically or heuristically. After all, in order to classify an ITVJ, one must know its English equivalent; but if one knows the English equivalent, why bother classifying? Wellington also has some trouble with terminology, including, of all things, the terms "transitive" and "intransitive" (she marks "to commute to school" as transitive!) as well as "auxiliary verb" (she includes *cause*, *make*, and other causatives in this category--p. 76).

Takemasa Fujita's ambitiously titled "The Syntax of Negation in English and Japanese" touches on many aspects of negation, and analyzes none of them satisfactorily. His paragraph on interrogatives, for instance (that's right, one paragraph) overlooks the existence of WH-questions. Here again there are some surprising errors--for example, Fujita claims (p. 98) that *pretend* undergoes "NEG-transportation," which would mean that "John pretended not to hear" is synonymous with "John didn't pretend to hear." Again, he claims, incorrectly, that "double negation" is ungrammatical in standard English, and that therefore "I don't think that it won't rain" is ungrammatical (p. 99), a misconception shared by Kayoda (p. 69).

Meg Katsuragi ("Japanese *koto* and *no* Compared with English Gerunds and Infinitives"), like Wellington, attacks an important problem--nominal clauses--but her paper is vitiated by her vagueness, inaccuracy, and ignorance of English grammar. She ignores the very existence of *that*-clauses, which dooms her comparison to failure from the start. She rejects Kuno's (1970) analysis, based on speaker presupposition, as being "not quite adequate to handle the *koto/no* problem" (p. 110; two

pages later, this becomes a bit stronger: "his concept of 'presupposition' in the use of *koto/no* is generally inapplicable"), without giving any evidence of this putative inadequacy, or replacing it with her own analysis. And finally, she ignores the Kiparskys' treatment of noun clauses in English (Kiparsky & Kiparsky, 1971), which gives a convincing account based on presupposition--in other words, an account that could be profitably compared with Kuno's. This is a surprising omission, since Kuno mentions the Kiparskys in his treatment of *koto/no/to* (Kuno, 1973, p. 214); it is all the more surprising in that Taylor, whom Katsuragi credits with making a greater contribution than she to the English section of the paper (p. 120), was a co-author of an EFL text that relies heavily on the Kiparskys' account (Crymes, James, Smith, & Taylor, 1974). The upshot of all this is that what could have been a useful article turns out to have nothing to say.

Akiko Hogg ("Japanese *-te+i+ta* and the English Progressive") disappoints in the same way. Her article is so sloppily written that it cannot help *not* making a contribution to our understanding of the differences between the two forms. She seems confused as to the distinction between tense and time, and between tense and aspect. Thus, for example, "Languages which can differentiate among various times often do not require these tense [sic] differences to be marked in the verb" (p. 131). Again, she says of the two sentences, *Kinoo neko ga uchi o katta* and *Moo neko ga uchi o katta*, that they "signal different times" (p. 133). Of the past progressive in English, she claims that "He was reading" indicates that the action of reading was "continuing (but completed) [sic] prior to the speaking time" (p. 139). Hogg distinguishes between "durative" and "instantaneous" verbs in

Japanese, but her analysis again is too superficial. In the following sentence: *Otoosan ga hairu to, Taroo wa neko o butte ita*, are we to understand that *butte ita* "signifies the resulting condition of the completed verbal action" (p. 137)? What condition? What completion? Something more needs to be said about Japanese verbs in the *-teita* form.

Fumiyo Yamanaka ("Overgeneralization from English V-ing to Japanese V-*te imasu*") presents an ill-designed survey of English and Japanese speakers, who were asked to translate three Japanese sentences into English and three English sentences into Japanese. Everyone did quite well, except for the sentence "He has read that book already," which most English speakers incorrectly did *not* translate as *Kare wa ano hon o moo yonde imasu*. This can hardly be considered overgeneralizing from V-ing to V-*te imasu*.

Susan H. Shinkawa, who with charming ingenuousness assures us that although she is "not a native speaker of Japanese, [she] is a Japanese language specialist" (p. 161), compares *at*, *in*, *on*, and *by* with *de*, *ni*, and *o*. She complains of the dearth of "published analyses of the location markers of English and Japanese" (p. 161); but for the purposes of her article, any standard grammar would have sufficed. In the case of the English locatives, for that matter, if she had simply thought for a few minutes, without consulting *any* published analysis, she should have been able to avoid some of the errors that she makes. She would have discovered, for instance, that contrary to what she says (p. 173), non-solid objects can occur with *on*—"floating on the water," "carried on the wind," etc. She would have realized that it is not accurate to say that a sentence like "She sat on the beach

on a box" is ungrammatical because "the smaller location which is enclosed by the larger must come first" (p. 174); both "She sat on the beach, on a box," and "On the beach, she sat on a box" are grammatical. In this paper, as elsewhere in the book, there is much unnecessary laying of groundwork that leads to no particularly useful insights into either language; e.g., the long list of ungrammatical combinations of Japanese locative particles. (It is typical of the laxness of all the writers in this volume that Shinkawa never specifically says that the constraints on these combinations apply only to simple sentences, i.e., a sentence like *Tookyoo NI tsuite, Tomodachi NI atta* or *Tookyoo NI sunde iru tomodachi wa hashi O watatta* is perfectly grammatical.)

Finally, Yohko Haniu ("Topicalization in Japanese and English") is handicapped by not knowing just what topicalization is. The result is a hodgepodge of confusing, inaccurate, and even self-contradictory statements. For instance, "When an English noun is topicalized, a coreferential pronoun replaces the noun in its original position" (p. 193). First of all, this is not Topicalization, it is Dislocation. But aside from that, Haniu no sooner says this than she illustrates the statement with an example that she herself marks as ungrammatical (p. 193: "The mountain, I saw it"). She claims that "all generic nouns in the subject position must be topicalized" in Japanese (p. 185). But this clearly is not true; if it were, then a sentence like *Raion ga niku o taberu* could never have a generic reading ("Lions eat meat"). The problem is that Haniu does not really understand the distinction between "generic" and "specific," or that between "definite" and "indefinite." Thus, for instance, she claims that "the only correct translation of

Kodomo ga urusai desu must be 'A child is noisy,' meaning some child that neither the speaker nor the hearer has been referring to or has otherwise indicated" (p. 185), which is of course simply not true. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a situation in which one could appropriately utter the sentence, "A child is noisy," other than generically, in which case one is certainly not referring to *a* child.

In general, the contributors to *English and Japanese in Contrast* illustrate Pope's admonition about the dangers of a little learning. They have taken a little sip from the Pierian spring of linguistics, and it has made them giddy. There is a general brandishing of technical terms either incorrectly or imprecisely: "transformation," "dominate," "feature," "agent," "tense," and so on, and on. Even Taylor does not seem to understand what "deep structure" means (pp. 6, 14). There is a general violating of Ockham's Razor--tree diagrams, "case frames," "features," most of which are either incorrect, or unenlightening, or both. And when all the quasi-scholarly litter is cleared away, we are left with no information that we could not have found in a standard grammar or textbook.

The contributors were students, for the most part, and most of them are not native speakers of English; one could thus reasonably expect some errors, both of style and of substance. (This doesn't mean, of course, that we should overlook the errors, or that, the errors once corrected, these articles would have been worth publishing.) But what are we to say of the editor? A responsible, conscientious editor, especially if he is editing his own students' work, surely would at least read the manuscripts. We could expect that he might spot at least some of

the more glaring errors (and there are many more not mentioned here). We could expect at least that he would spare his students and us the embarrassment of seeing printed such gaffes as the following:

It has been pointed out by Professor Harvey Taylor ... that both English and Japanese speakers can think in universal terms of present, past, and future. (p. 146)

Taylor ... has pointed out that in English there are two semantic interpretations of the '-ed' form. (p. 117)

This book, in short, should never have been published, and both Taylor and Regents should be ashamed of themselves for perpetrating it. But it *was* published, and that fact in itself is indicative of the sorry state of the TEFL profession in Japan. If this had been, say, *English and French in Contrast*, it would never have seen the light of day. But in Japan, as this book shows, you can publish anything. As long as that remains true, as long as we remain content to buy no matter what until the real thing comes along, the real thing is not going to come along. The real thing requires knowledge, skill, and work; *English and Japanese in Contrast* shows evidence of none of these.

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